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# Can Americans Put Rancor of Presidential Election Behind Them? Professors Call for Healing and Renewed Care for U.S. Democracy

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Nov. 2, 2004  
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## NEWS RELEASE

### **CAN AMERICANS PUT RANCOR OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BEHIND THEM? PROFESSORS CALL FOR HEALING AND RENEWED CARE FOR U.S. DEMOCRACY**

DAYTON, Ohio — After a long, bitter campaign season, can Americans put anger and divisiveness aside and rally around their president?

Professors in sociology, religious studies and American studies at the University of Dayton say the wounds of this campaign run deep and aren't likely to heal soon.

The country will continue to be polarized unless "all sides recognize the need for healing," said Sandra Yocum Mize, chair of the religious studies department.

"I'm not sure we are going to have much interest given how little trust there is on all sides on the national level. I am quite frankly not very optimistic," she said. "Perhaps we have to turn to working on the local level. We have issues that ought to go beyond partisan politics, including education and health care. Can we bring together those leaders — not necessarily politicians — who are the kind of 'salt of the earth' types who have a vision beyond Republican and Democrat who recognize the importance of putting the welfare of the community first?"

Americans need to rededicate themselves to strengthening democracy, "a resilient but astonishingly fragile system that needs constant tending to flourish," said Una Cadegan, director of the American studies program. "We've been treating democracy and the Constitution as some sort of indestructible plaything and battering it around like a furious 2-year-old," she said.

As people have dug in and taken sides, the "common good" has been the real loser, according to Theo Majka, a professor of sociology who specializes in political sociology. He predicts continued polarization until more people recognize a shared sense of responsibility for the "growing economic disparities that are detrimental to our core values" as a country.

"We are a divided society — by race and ethnicity, class, where we live (city, suburb, small town, rural), what kind of religious beliefs we adhere to (individualistic focus on being saved versus a social gospel with an emphasis on social responsibility and justice), what part of the country we live in, how the economy has affected us," he noted. "This is a difficult issue."

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